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Proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Programme 23. Public information

1. The preparation, format and content of the medium-term plan and its revisions are governed by the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

2. Regulation 3.11 provides, *inter alia*, that the medium-term plan shall be revised as necessary every two years to incorporate required programme changes and that the proposed revisions shall be as detailed as required to incorporate the programme implications of the resolutions and decisions adopted by the intergovernmental organs or international conferences since the adoption of the plan.

3. The revisions proposed below modify paragraphs 23.1 to 23.4 and 23.6 to 23.24 of programme 23, Public information, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 51/219 of 18 December 1996 and issued in document A/51/6/Rev.1 and Corr.1.

4. The Committee on Information is responsible for reviewing the revisions proposed under this subprogramme. Consultations with the Committee took place during its twentieth session.

A. Programme

Paragraph 23.1

In the first sentence, *replace* the words "in cooperation with ... the work of the Organization" with the words "an informed public understanding of the activities of the United Nations among the peoples of the world. Only through an informed public understanding can the Organization generate and sustain universal support for its mission".

In the second sentence, after the words "such as" *replace* the rest of the paragraph with the following:

"the media, non-governmental organizations, business organizations, academic institutions, educational organizations and

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government agencies. The Department will take full advantage of all available channels of communication such as the Internet, radio, television, print products, photo and other electronic media, as well as other outreach activities and services to the public, to publicize the activities of the Organization in such priority fields as peace and security, economic and social development and human rights and to provide timely and reliable information on the proceedings of United Nations organs, meetings and conferences, as well as on the activities of the Secretary-General. A major challenge will be to demonstrate the successes of the Organization and the relevance of every aspect of its work to the daily lives and concerns of people everywhere so that global public support may be strengthened. The Department will also strengthen its cooperation with United Nations substantive departments, offices, agencies, programmes and funds, which will be instrumental to the effective delivery of the United Nations message and the development of system-wide thematic information campaigns on priority issues of concern to the international community. Furthermore, in keeping with the Secretary-General's call for a communications culture to permeate all activities of the Organization, the Department will seek to ensure that the communications function is placed at the heart of strategic management of the Organization."

Paragraph 23.2

Replace the paragraph with the following:

"23.2 Building on the Secretary-General's reform programme, as set out in his report of 14 July 1992 (A/51/950), and the recommendations of the Task Force on the Reorientation of the United Nations Public Information Activities, the Department will develop and pursue a strategy of placing the communications function at the heart of the strategic management of the Organization and consolidating all communications activities under a strong senior leadership that would be part of the Secretary-General's immediate team. The goals of that strategy are to turn the United Nations into an effective modern communications-oriented organization; to strengthen the Organization's capacity to communicate at the country level so that the global messages, activities and information of the United Nations both reflect and are tailored to a meaningful local context; and to create a culture of communications throughout the Organization with responsibility for public diplomacy being borne by all senior officials, ambassadors and the larger United Nations family."

Paragraph 23.3

At the beginning of the first sentence, *insert* the words "With guidance from the Committee on Information, which oversees its work,"

In the second sentence, *insert* the words "original and principal" before the word "mandate".

At the end of the third sentence, *add* ", 51/138 A and B and 52/70 A and B."

Paragraph 23.4

In subparagraph (a), *insert* the word "Strategic" at the beginning of the sentence and the words "economic and social", after the word "political,".

In subparagraph (g), *replace* the words "United Nations audiences" with the words "audiences around the world".

After subparagraph (j), *add* the following new subparagraph:

"(k) Monitoring and evaluation of information activities with a view to ensuring optimum effectiveness."

B. Subprogrammes

Subprogramme 23.1 *Promotional services*

Paragraph 23.6

In the first sentence, *replace* the words "has sharpened its focus," with the words "will continue".

In the second sentence, *replace* "Promotion and Public Services, the Library and Publications, and the Media Divisions" with "Promotion and Public Services Division, the Library and Publications Division, the Media Division and the United Nations information centres and services".

Replace paragraphs 23.7 to 23.11 with the following:

"23.7 The primary objective of the subprogramme is to promote an informed positive public understanding of the activities of the United Nations and to help build a broad-based global support for the Organization's goals by highlighting the priority issues of concern to the international community. The major challenge in this regard will be the ability to reflect effectively and in a timely manner the activities, successes and performance of the Organization and the relevance of every aspect of its work to the daily lives and concerns of people everywhere.

"23.8 In keeping with the Secretary-General's emphasis on building a system-wide culture of communications and on placing the communications and information functions at the heart of the strategic management of the Organization, a second objective of the subprogramme will be building partnerships within the Secretariat and the common system. Forging partnerships at the headquarters and field levels and, with other departments and organizations of the United Nations system will be instrumental in the effective delivery of United Nations messages and in building an informed and supportive constituency. It is also essential for attaining the third key objective, the development and implementation of system-wide thematic information campaigns on priority issues of concern to the international community. At the local and regional levels, United Nations information centres will be responsible for implementation of the information programmes, taking into account local priorities.

"23.9 Equally important is the fourth objective of the subprogramme, the strengthening of partnerships with the

Department's key constituencies, who are the targets of its thematic information campaigns. A particular focus of such efforts must be media institutions. The media is a key and indispensable partner in projecting United Nations messages to a worldwide audience. A strong, activist media orientation will be a priority for every activity under this subprogramme. In addition to developing information material for the media, long-term working relationships with journalists covering specific issues of concern to the United Nations will continue to be developed with a view to fostering greater understanding and interest in the Organization's work and, ultimately, to encouraging the publication or broadcast in the media of feature stories and reports about the work of the United Nations in such priority fields as peace and security, economic and social development and human rights. To foster such relationships, the Department would provide the media with story ideas and background information both at Headquarters and through the United Nations information centres and services.

"23.10 Fostering stronger relationships with another key constituency, non-governmental organizations and other elements of civil society, such as educational institutions and professional and business organizations, will also require a proactive approach. The Department will work with representative elements of civil society that are actively engaged with the United Nations, as well as to mobilize new constituencies.

"23.11 The sixth objective of the subprogramme will be to strengthen the capability to provide authoritative, accurate and timely information in response to media comments and instances of misinformation about the Organization. In close cooperation with other departments and offices of the Secretariat, multimedia information programmes will be developed to enhance public understanding of the United Nations.

"23.12 The ability of the United Nations to communicate its message effectively will depend largely on how well it packages and presents its operations to its key constituencies in a timely and, in particular for the media, news-oriented manner. The construction of a more effective multimedia delivery system is therefore the seventh key objective of the subprogramme. In that regard, the Department will continue to enhance its capacity to use the Internet to its full potential. The Department will also continue to strengthen its capacity as the department responsible for coordinating, managing and providing public information content for the United Nations website. At the same time, the traditional media, print, radio and television, will continue to receive high priority to ensure outreach to all countries.

"23.13 The eighth objective will be further to enhance public interest in the work and activities of the Organization through the promotion of educational programmes and the development of school curricula about the United Nations, training programmes for journalists, symposia with media and government partners,

exhibitions and guided tours. The Department's programme of advocacy will also make greater efforts to work with celebrities and public figures to promote awareness of United Nations issues and concerns and to mobilize support for the work of the Organization."

Renumber the subsequent paragraphs accordingly.

Subprogramme 23.2 Information services

Paragraph 23.12
(New paragraph 23.14)

In the first sentence, *replace* the words "has continued" with the words "will continue".

Paragraph 23.13
(New paragraph 23.15)

In the second sentence, *replace* the word "magazines" with the words "and feature programmes", and *delete* the last sentence.

After the paragraph, *add* new paragraphs 23.16 to 23.19 as follows:

"23.16 The second objective of the subprogramme is to develop a timely and more effective news-gathering and delivery system to be built around the concept of a multimedia central news desk with stronger news-gathering and timely distribution capacity tied to the global daily news cycle. A starting point would be the development of the *Daily Highlights* into a news service, using the Internet and other channels of rapid communications as a delivery mechanism. The system will contribute to the strengthening of the Department's rapid media response capacity.

"23.17 The third objective of the subprogramme is to develop a system of coordinated delivery of information across different media by electronic means. This will entail the development of advanced digital technology, computerizing all audio-visual material to ensure availability on demand.

"23.18 Enhancing partnerships and programme exchange with national and international radio and television broadcasters is the fourth objective of the subprogramme. The Department will strengthen and enhance its successful initiative with international broadcasters in jointly covering United Nations activities at Headquarters and in the field.

"23.19 The fifth objective of the subprogramme is to further develop the multimedia section of the Internet to achieve a fully automated and integrated system that can deliver high-quality audio, photo and video material on demand. Emphasis will be placed on using the Internet to maximize outreach activities to strengthen the understanding of the goals of the United Nations among target audiences. Through the United Nations in-house Intranet, the Department will continue to provide constantly updated information on United Nations-topics and other international situations."

Paragraph 23.14
(New paragraph 23.20)

At the beginning of the first sentence, *insert* the words "The sixth objective will be" and *delete* the words "is an equally important objective of the subprogramme" at the end of the sentence.

Paragraph 23.15
(New paragraph 23.21)

Replace the word "third" with the word "seventh" and *add* the following at the end of the paragraph:

"To broaden outreach, the development by the United Nations information centres of home pages in local languages will be further encouraged and supported."

Paragraph 23.16
(New paragraph 23.22)

Replace paragraph 23.16 with the following:

"23.22 The eighth objective of the subprogramme is to seek ways and means for the development of a United Nations international radio broadcasting capacity for direct communication with United Nations constituencies. This will allow for a direct, far-reaching and cost-effective information delivery mechanism that will be immediately available for the entire United Nations system and the leadership of the Organization, particularly in times of crisis. The system will also support the public information needs of peacekeeping operations and humanitarian emergency situations, in particular at their start-up stage."

Paragraph 23.17
(New paragraph 23.23)

Replace the word "fifth" with the word "ninth".

Subprogramme 23.3 Library services

Paragraph 23.18
(New paragraph 23.24)

In the first sentence, *insert* the words ", as well as cartographic information services" after the words "research services"; *replace* the words ", and to ensure the continuous maintenance of an archival system" with "and depository libraries worldwide and to maintain, preserve and make available an archival collection", and at the end of the sentence, *add* the words ", as well as a collection of United Nations oral history tapes and transcripts".

Paragraph 23.19
(New paragraph 23.25)

At the end of the paragraph, *add* the following:

"The United Nations system consortium, which was initiated by the Department and established in 1997 for the purpose of sharing costs

of and access to electronic sources of information throughout the United Nations system of organizations and securing volume-drive reductions in subscription rates, will be maintained and expanded."

Paragraph 23.20
(New paragraph 23.26)

At the beginning of the second sentence, after the words "This includes", *insert* ": (a)".

At the end of the paragraph, *add* the following:

"; (b) development of a network of United Nations libraries and sharing and indexing of United Nations documents; and (c) access to external electronic information resources".

Paragraph 23.21
(New paragraph 23.27)

In the second sentence, after the word "issuing", *insert* the word "multilingual".

At the end of the paragraph, *add* the following:

"Access to the full text of United Nations documents in the six official languages will be further facilitated by enhanced links between the optical disk system and the indexing records of the United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS). The expansion of the UNBIS Thesaurus will permit searching in the official languages of the Organization. Further, a programme to be put in place for conversion of older United Nations documents from microfiche to digital format will enable their uploading to the optical disk system and to the United Nations website.

After the paragraph, *add* a new paragraph 23.28 as follows:

"23.28 A fourth objective will be to continue to provide map-making, map reference and geographical information services in support of substantive activities of the Secretariat, as well as editorial control services for all map issuances under the United Nations imprint system-wide. Microfilming of the cartographic archives and improving map library services will also continue. The expanding role of digital data exchange in the day-to-day operation of most programmes will require the improvement of existing products, such as the country-profile maps, and the development of new ones with interactive and multi-use attributes. Upgrades to cartography and the map collection will be made to facilitate these services. A geographic data library will be built and standards for geographic data to be used by the United Nations will be compiled and implemented. In conjunction, efforts will be made to strengthen the network of geographical information system (GIS) professionals throughout the Organization to facilitate the sharing of information via GIS web server technology."

Renumber the subsequent paragraphs accordingly.

Paragraph 23.22
(New paragraph 23.29)

In the third sentence, *replace* the words "is enabling" with the words "will enable".

Delete the last three sentences.

Subprogramme 23.4 Publication services

Paragraph 23.23
(New paragraph 23.30)

In the second sentence, *replace* the word "increase" with the words "focus on" and at the end of the sentence *add*: ", as well as providing efficient design and production coordination services for the Secretariat".

After the second sentence, *insert* the following: "These publications will include not only institutional reference guides and news-oriented periodicals, but also publications designed to correct public misperceptions about the work of the Organization and more advocacy-driven outputs. All publications will be produced in close collaboration with substantive departments."

In the third sentence, *replace* the word "such" with the word "authoritative".

Replace the last sentence with the following: "Advanced information technologies, in particular the Internet, will be used to reach potentially vast new audiences with timely information about the United Nations."

Paragraph 23.24
(New paragraph 23.31)

At the beginning of the first sentence, *replace* the words "The third" with the words "A further".

At the end of the second sentence, *add* the following: ", as well as through the establishment of new publishing partnerships to further expand outreach and sales".

Delete the last three sentences.

C. Legislative mandates

Add the following resolutions:

General Assembly resolutions

52/12	Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform
52/70	Questions relating to information
52/220	Questions relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999